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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY NATSIOS' SUDAN CONTACT GROUP MEETING

Classified By: DCM Kevin M. Johnson for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On February 9, Special Envoy Andrew Natsios joined the Sudan Contact Group meeting in Oslo to assess the state of play in Sudan. Although implementation of the CPA has been stalled, all parties stressed the need to maintain a unified Sudan and to encourage an IGAD summit to set benchmarks to measure implementation progress. On Darfur, parties agreed that patience was exhausted and that the time had come for stronger measures. The parties (including the EU) expressed the view that it would be useful to meet soon to discuss stronger unified measures. In a follow-on meeting with Norwegians, both sides agreed that the Contact Group needs to find a way to target Bashir and his close circle without causing a reaction that would further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Norwegians favor working with Eritrea on a planned all-Darfur-parties meeting in Libya. END SUMMARY

Vraalsen on the CPA and Abyei

12. (SBU) Assessment and Evaluation Commission (AEC) Chair Tom Vraalsen noted some progress in establishing CPA structures such as the Government of National Unity. However, substantive political problems persist, all essentially involving either oil or the militias. Although the AEC has repeatedly debated these issues, there has been no progress. Vraalsen pleaded for the highest levels in capitals to reengage on the CPA. He explained a Kenyan suggestion to convene an IGAD Summit on the CPA and urged the group to support this plan. He thought the Summit should set benchmarks and ask the AEC to report to IGAD on those areas.

13. (SBU) Growing concern with attacks on the AEC was raised, particularly the statements that the AEC is overstepping its mandate on Abyei. Vraalsen pointed out that Abyei is clearly a flashpoint that needs an urgent resolution. The EU representative Jean-Christophe Belliard suggested that perhaps a Security Council statement on Abyei would help.

14. (SBU) Belliard then urged the group to be unambiguous in supporting the unity of Sudan. The UK representative Jessica Irvine agreed that stronger messages on the unity of Sudan by the international community were important. She suggested taking a longer-term perspective on a deal that would cover oil revenue sharing so as to promote the concept of unity. The group noted the conflicting interests of the parties with regard to unity. Belliard also noted that the business community is working towards deals that reflect two Sudans.

He urged the group to press countries with large business interests to support unity. Some NGOs operating in the south have been promoting separatism and members were urged to discourage their NGOs from taking this approach.

15. (SBU) The group concluded that the international community should frame the issue so the parties see it in their own best interest to have a unified Sudan. This could be done if development aid were seen to flow to the south. It also might be done by franker discussions with the SPLM to outline the likely bloody consequences of an attempt to separate.

In conclusion, the group agreed to:

- stress the unity of Sudan;
- support the IGAD Summit proposal; and
- support the AEC through more pressure from capitals.

In addition, three Contact Group members agreed to provide weekly updates on three key areas: UK (security), the Netherlands (Abyei), and Canada (elections).

Sudan Consortium and Debt Relief

16. (SBU) Netherlands representative Huub Buijs reported that reconstruction is slow but there is some movement. He urged monitoring of the UN-WB agreement in the Sudan Consortium. Because of the likely mid-term implementation of the UN-WB programs (due to limited government capacity in the south) quick-impact directly funded programs would be useful. UK representative Jessica Irvine raised the question of debt relief for Khartoum. All parties agreed this would be premature.